



Oregon Folklore by Suzi Jones

Review by: Thomas Nash

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more final cadences on a non-tonic note" (p. 25). Apart from the loaded terms "modulation" and "non-tonic," this gives an entirely misleading impression, as if someone were to say that Brahms's melodies were less elastic and uninhibited than Wagner's.

Out of the total 131 songs, upwards of fifty carry the comments "inflected" or "minus" a certain degree in the mode. As this number constitutes approximately one-third of the tunes, this is more than a modicum of the whole, and must be noted. In some cases the inflections fall on two or three degrees of the scale. While this in itself is not so important if the character of the mode is intact, singers frequently use a shifting, fluid conception of mode which does not fit neatly into the penta-, hexa-, or heptatonic forms of the church system. In several cases there are errors in identifying modes; the transcription of 70, sung by "Queen" Caroline Hughes, looks suspicious, even unclassifiable, with its unstable tonality. A sizeable batch of tunes (around thirty) have variable thirds and sevenths, these being the tones most usually altered in British and North American traditional song.

When all is said and done, however (the "occasional sniping" of reviewers is somewhat defensively mentioned in the introduction), one is grateful for this anthology as a first step towards documenting what has come to be seen as an increasingly significant set of traditions. It builds on the pioneer recordings made by other fieldworkers in the 1950s, complementing songs published in Peter Kennedy's *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (1975) and in academic journals such as *Scottish Studies*. The editors are sympathetic towards their subject and informants; this sympathy shines through the entire work. Mere criticism, though, must rightly take issue with methodological and other inconsistencies, for the book does pretend to scholarship. The pervasive influence of Bronson is observable in the tune classifications, although the headnotes restrict themselves to discussion of texts, not tune histories or families. The lack of sound documentation is regrettable; it could have been included without greatly expanding the book. In short, the work has its failings and omissions; the contents, however, will yield their riches to the discerning reader.

JAMES PORTER

*University of California
Los Angeles, California*

Oregon Folklore. By SUZI JONES. (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon and the Oregon Arts Commission, 1977. Pp. 120. Index)

Occasionally an author misinterprets her audience. Suzi Jones makes such a mistake in the introduction to *Oregon Folklore* when she says, "This book is for the people of Oregon." Not entirely so. To be sure, Webfooters will enjoy the witty tales and lavish photojournalism of the

text; but for folklorists in North Carolina, Texas, and Michigan, the book serves the same purposes as other regional collections such as *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers*, *Saints of Sage and Saddle*, and *We Always Lie to Strangers*. Jones's text is surely the best available source of Northwest lore, rivalled only by *The Dynamics of Folklore*, Barre Toelken's recent offering, which shares an interest in Northwest lore but makes no claims to regionalism.

The material in *Oregon Folklore* comes primarily from the Randall V. Mills Archives at the University of Oregon, where Jones, until recently, was curator. Funded by the Oregon Arts Commission, the text was initially planned as a modest "picture book," a homey display of archive material augmented by legends, tales, and traditions that the author had collected while working as a folk arts representative of the Smithsonian Institution. Happily, the project outgrew its expectations, and *Oregon Folklore* is more than a "scrapbook, a photo album, a family record for Oregonians," as Jones asserts. Indeed, despite the hobbles placed on the text by its author, this volume captures that ethereal *cultural ecology* of the Northwest—a communal spirit that Oregonians cherish and promulgate, but cannot define.

Oregon Folklore is divided neatly into two sections. In Part I Jones discusses the intricate web of relationships between culture and geography in Oregon. To recreate for readers the "sense of place" shared by Oregonians, she describes and characterizes the three distinct regions of the state—the Oregon Coast, the Willamette Valley, and Eastern Oregon. Using both history and esoteric lore, Jones portrays the ambience of each of these regions, establishing a context for the narratives, superstitions, and traditions that are presented in the second section. Part II is loosely organized according to folklore genre, featuring chapters on building, storytelling, working, celebrating, fiddling, believing, talking, and folk art ("From Oregon Hands").

The worth of this volume lies in the broad range of lore that Jones has gleaned from every corner of the state of Oregon. From the Willamette Valley she has gathered architectural designs for McKenzie River driftboats and *Münchhausen*-type tales from the master storyteller B. F. "Huck" Finn. From the Coast she has collected buried treasure legends (the Neahkahnie Treasure) and the salty superstitions of Astoria fishermen. From east of the Cascades Jones has taken stories of the Tommy-knockers who haunt the mines and pictures of Morman hay derricks in action. She includes the Rogue River stretchers of the hairlip historian Hathaway Jones and the Coyote tales of a Native American storyteller. In her chapter on folk speech, Jones offers a dictionary of loggers' jargon, such as "crummy" (a loggers' omnibus), "school marm" (tree with a forked top), "widowmaker" (a dangerous snag), and "board stretchers" (there's no such thing, you fool). The professional folklorist will also find interesting discussions of the Basque handball courts of Jordan

Valley, Peter French's round barn near Barton Lake, and the whittling techniques of Oakridge's Chris Christiansen. Although the abbreviated discussions of Oregon lore leave the reader wanting to know more about Jones's informants, their stories and their crafts, the abundant photographs and diagrams partially compensate for what has been left out of the text.

In writing primarily of the *cultural ecology* of the state of Oregon, Jones recognizes the significant contributions of immigrants and "outsiders" whose isolated pockets of tradition grow stronger as the laws of marginal distribution take effect. As a result, she includes observations about Ukrainian Easter egg designs, beltmaking patterns of the Russian Old Believers, and *lefse* recipes of Norwegian bakers. This eclectic approach is appropriate, for Oregon is less a geographic than a cultural community. Every year, more and more people hit the new Oregon Trail, loading their station wagons with traditions, rituals, and songs from many lands and many societies. Unlike the isolated Upper Peninsula of Michigan or Vance Randolph's rugged Ozarks, the state of Oregon adopts many sons and daughters; therefore, the term "Oregonian" can be used to describe the particular *style* that lore acquires when warped by the rain. A specific example is the folksong "Wet Oregon," sung to the tune of the traditional hymn "Beulah Land." Folklorists have uncovered versions of this Puritan tune in many states where emigrants sought out a new American Eden during the last century—Kansas, South Dakota, and New Mexico, for example. In Oregon's Willamette Valley, the initial line, "I've reached the land of corn and wine" becomes "I've reached the land of rain and mud." Jones makes the point with clarity that Oregon lore is often New England legend purged of its dialect or Appalachian song softened by nostalgia, while the only true "Oregonian" lore is the undercurrent of Indian tradition that new settlers adopted and altered during the pioneer years.

Despite the author's intentions, *Oregon Folklore* is not really just for the people of Oregon. In fact, the book's arrival should be good news to the professional folklorist who uses a regional approach in the classroom. Until now the only appropriate resources for dealing with regional folklore in Oregon were back issues of the now-defunct *Northwest Folklore* and a smattering of articles, widely scattered, in other journals. Frankly, the parochial approach of *Oregon Folklore* provides some limitations for the use of the book, and its value may not extend beyond introductory courses. Although Jones hints at some new ideas about legend transmission in her chapter entitled "Storytelling," she normally avoids folklore theory entirely. Furthermore, the professional folklorist may find the absence of traditional jargon troublesome and the ratio of text to context uneven. Nevertheless, it is reassuring and handy to have this compendium of Northwest lore available to demonstrate to students that folklore in the West does not really end at Utah. Despite

its shortcomings, *Oregon Folklore* is a worthy contribution and a necessary text for those folklorists who find that *Buying the Wind* leaves some large gaps in a folklorist's map of the United States.

THOMAS NASH

Central Michigan University
Mount Pleasant, Michigan

I Heard the Old Fishermen Say: Folklore of the Texas Gulf Coast. By PATRICK B. MULLEN. (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1978. Pp. xxx + 183. Introduction, photographs, appendices, bibliography. \$15.00)

I Heard the Old Fishermen Say is a wide-ranging work which is difficult to characterize succinctly. It is a functional study of belief, drawing heavily on Malinowski's "anxiety-ritual theory" of magic, but it also examines from other viewpoints a variety of narratives including belief legends, buried treasure legends, local character anecdotes, and tall tales. The book is divided into two parts: one interprets the beliefs and related legends of bay and open sea fishermen as occupational traditions, and the other analyzes various narratives from Texas Gulf Coast communities as regional folklore. Mullen also introduces a skilled tall-tale teller and adeptly profiles this narrator's oral style and expressive role. Considerable sociological and historical background is provided on the Texas Gulf Coast fishing industry, much of the latter being gleaned from Mullen's interviews with older fishermen.

If there is one major criticism to be made of this work, it is that the author is committed to the view of folklore as reflecting and reinforcing "culture." Although the materials examined and the analyses employed are diverse, the interpretations offered by Mullen ultimately are all based on this notion. For example, buried treasure legends are seen as expressions of "folk ideas" reinforcing the "worldview" of the community; local character anecdotes are interpreted as symbolic expressions of the community's norms and values; and belief legends are portrayed as reinforcing the beliefs held by fishermen. Such assertions stress the function of folklore as a socializing agent but appear to overlook the possibility of narratives and beliefs being means of parodying, criticizing, and fashioning one's traditions. In this light the concluding chapter, "The Imaginative Force in Folklore," is somewhat of an anomaly in that it introduces the notion that the fishermen's folklore exhibits "a consistent use of the imagination to attempt to get meaning out of life" (p. 154). While imagination is well exemplified in Mullen's preceding chapter on the expressive role of a tall-tale teller, the bulk of the book is dedicated to a differing view—that folklore contributes to the individual's cultural conditioning.